

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended): A telecommunications method using non-geostationary Earth satellites (~~S1, S2, S3 and S4~~) and in which the Earth is divided into areas (~~20i~~) inside which calls involving terminals in said area are relayed by a management station (~~22~~) and a communication between each terminal (~~241, 242, etc.~~) and the management station communicate-is realized via a satellite, another satellite taking over a call when the former satellite is no longer used, ~~characterized in that,~~wherein the terminals being stationary, commanding handover of calls from one satellite to another makes use of predetermined times during which at least two satellites are simultaneously visible from the area or from a portion of the area,

wherein call handovers are realized collectively for a plurality of terminals,

wherein in determining the handover time for each terminal, allowance is made for the power available and/or the availability of communication resources, and

wherein handover times are commanded so that they can be distributed over all the terminals during the period of double visibility of the satellites.

2. (currently amended): A method according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~wherein handover of calls involving the terminals from one satellite to another is commanded from the management station-~~(22)~~.

3. - 5. (canceled).

6. (currently amended): A method according to claim 41, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the handover times are distributed so that the resources used by each satellite are substantially the same.

7. (currently amended): A method according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the times of handover of calls from one satellite to another are predefined for each terminal.

8. (currently amended): A method according to claim 7, ~~characterized in that~~wherein call quality is monitored for each terminal and a call is handed over to another satellite ahead of time if the call quality for a terminal falls below a predetermined threshold, for example because of masking.

9. (currently amended): A method according to claim 7, ~~characterized in that~~wherein a call is handed over to another satellite ahead of time if said other satellite provides a communication capacity greater than that of the former satellite.

10. (currently amended): A method according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the terrestrial areas ~~(20i)~~ are fixed.

11. (currently amended): A method according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the resources allocated to a terminal for a satellite include a carrier frequency and a plurality of codes, especially Hadamard sequences, and/or time slots.

12. (currently amended): A method according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~wherein a single system (72)-for allocating resources (74)-is provided in each terminal and/or the management station and said resources are duplicated during a handover period.

13. (currently amended): A method according to claim 12, ~~characterized in that~~wherein two cells, packets or other signals to be relayed simultaneously via two different satellites have different carrier frequencies and preferably the same codes.

14. (currently amended): A method according to claim 12, ~~characterized in that~~wherein zero power is allocated to signals on the second path before handover and zero power is allocated to signals on the first path after handover.

15. (currently amended): A method according to claim 14, ~~characterized in that~~wherein non-zero powers are allocated to both sets of cells or packets during a transition period, for example equal to a cell or packet time slot.

16. (currently amended): A method according to claim 12, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the powers allocated to the duplicated cells or packets are monitored.

17. - 24. (canceled).

25. (currently amended): A management station according to claim ~~22~~26, ~~characterized in that it includes~~further comprising a system for allocating the terminals carrier frequencies divided into non-contiguous subsets, two carriers from the same subset being chosen to hand over a call from one satellite to another.

26. (new): A management station for a telecommunication system in which terrestrial areas are defined, each terminal in an area communicating with the telecommunication system via a management station in the corresponding area, calls between the management station and the terminals being relayed via a satellite, means being provided in each terminal for commanding handover of calls from a first satellite to a second satellite, said station including means for commanding said handover of calls involving stationary terminals in the area, or in a portion of the area, using predetermined times at which at least two satellites are visible simultaneously in that area or in another portion of that area, wherein, the handovers of calls being realized for a plurality of terminals, it comprises, for determining individual handover times for each terminal a function of the allocation of power and/or communication resources, periods of handover from one satellite to another being commanded so that they can be distributed over all the terminals during the period of double visibility of the satellites.

27. (new): A method according to claim 2, wherein the handover times are distributed so that the resources used by each satellite are substantially the same.